FIRST COMICS™
NOV. $1.25
NO. 20
$1.60 CANADA

E-MAN

IF YOU KNEW HERB...

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%FIRST COMICS,
1014 DAVIS STREET,
EVANSTON, ILLINOIS
60201

Dear Folks,

Now that Linda Hunt has won Best Supporting Actress for the movie "Year of Living Dangerously," will Teddy Q. change the poster hanging in Nova's new apartment?

Dave Margosian
426 Four Mile Road
Racine, Wisconsin 53402

C'mon, David. Would Romeo give up Juliet? Would Roy Rogers turn in Dale? Or Trigger? Would Popeye cheat on Olive Oyl? Teddy is in love with Amy Irving ... and as best as we can tell, it's an affair to remember. Mr. Q. knows that Linda Hunt won the Oscar, but we know that she didn't win his heart. That belongs to Ms. Irving, a wonderful actress in her own right. Incidentally, Teddy is pushing for Ms. Hunt to play him in the soon-to-be-released epic, "The Teddy Q. Story."

Dear First,

Among all your titles, E-Man is one I don't read regularly. However, I may just change my mind. E-Man 15 was very much like Plastic Man. I love it! By the way — I noticed the Koala again. What's its name? Origin? He's cute. Is he a pet?

M.T. Lunsford
82C Jonesboro Rd.
McDonough, GA 30253

It's quite obvious, M.T., that you'll be the first person in line to get tickets for Linda Hunt's soon-to-be-released epic. **Joe Staton,** *co-creator of* **E-Man** *and its penciller/writer, informs me that Jack Cole, creator of Plastic Man, was one of his favorite artists. Joe also drew Plastic Man in the late 70's. Maybe that explains the resemblence.*

Dear Mr. Gold:

When I saw E-Man 16, I thought it was my imagination, but now that the other titles are out it has become obvious that you have changed to better paper. Good move! The improvement is terrific. No more reading both sides of the paper at once. I just hope the change is not a temporary one. Raise your prices if you must, but keep the quality paper — your magazines deserve it!

Peter Walpole
3730 Marlbrough Way
College Park, MD 20740

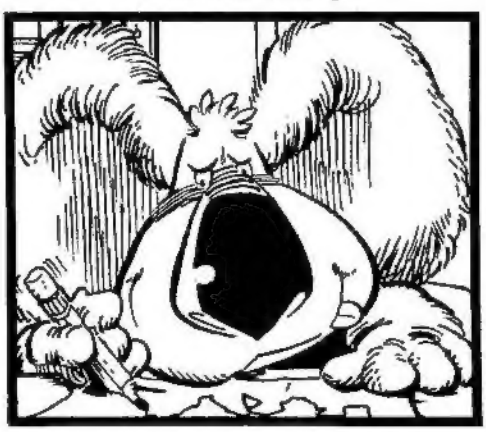
P.S. — How about a short course on paper and printing in First Notes.

All of First Comics have had an upgrade of paper this month. What you are holding in your hand is the paper stock that we'll be printing on for a while. We have been experimenting with different papers over the past few months and we've settled on the one that these insides are made of. In regards to our price, obviously you've noticed something since you wrote your letter. Your wish is our command. Mike Gold informs me that he is planning a "paper & printing" First Notes. Watch for it.

Dear Joe,

Mike Mauser is a classic! Let's see some more of that old style in Mike Mauser, you know, bumbling yet tough and gritty, solving brutal mysteries. Just thinking about it makes me want to read a Mike Mauser stripe. How about it, Joe, give Mike about 12 pages a month to have his own adventures?

Frank D'Urso
Address Missing



Dear Joe,

I've just read the last few issues of E-Man and I feel you've brought the book back to the glory of its first incarnation. You've eliminated the heavy-handed satire and replaced it with lighter, more palatable humor meshed with a cast I care more about.

I have just one request: how about seeing more development in Alec and Nova's relationship? Alec isn't even sure what love is, yet he says he loves Nova. I think the progress of their affair would be fascinating.

Mikel G. Burton
10501 E. 78th Terrace
K.C., MO 64138

Thanks for the kind wishes, Mikel. Love affairs seem to be important this month. I mean, David Margosian wants Teddy to drop Amy for Linda. And you want Alec's affair with Nova to progress. I think it would be fascinating, too. But what do I know ... I'm not even Joe.

NEXT MONTH: Who is the Golden Gopher? What is the B-Team? What is E-Man doing with these guys? And who cuts Mr. Z's hair? Find out in **E-Man #21!**

— Rick Obadiah

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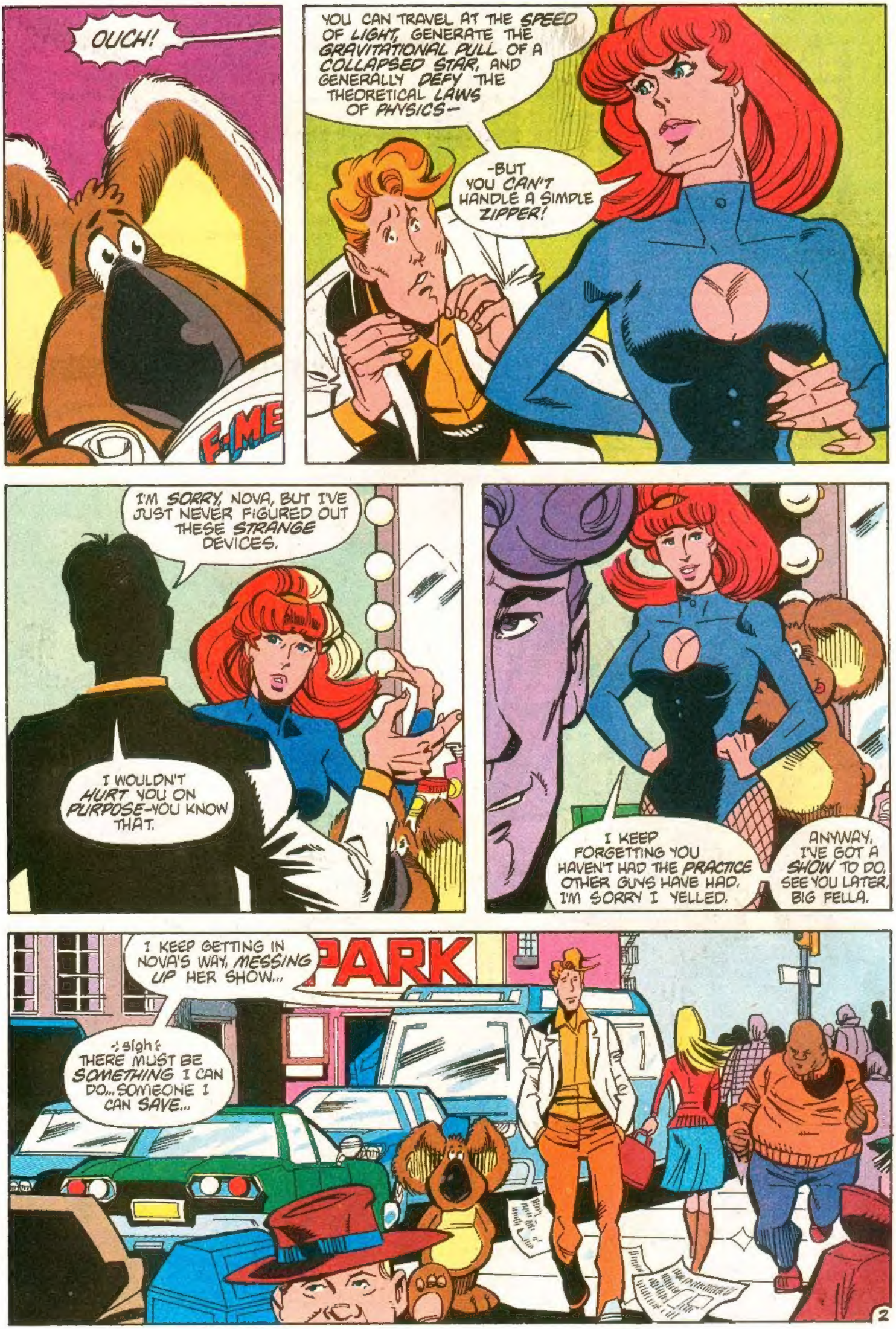
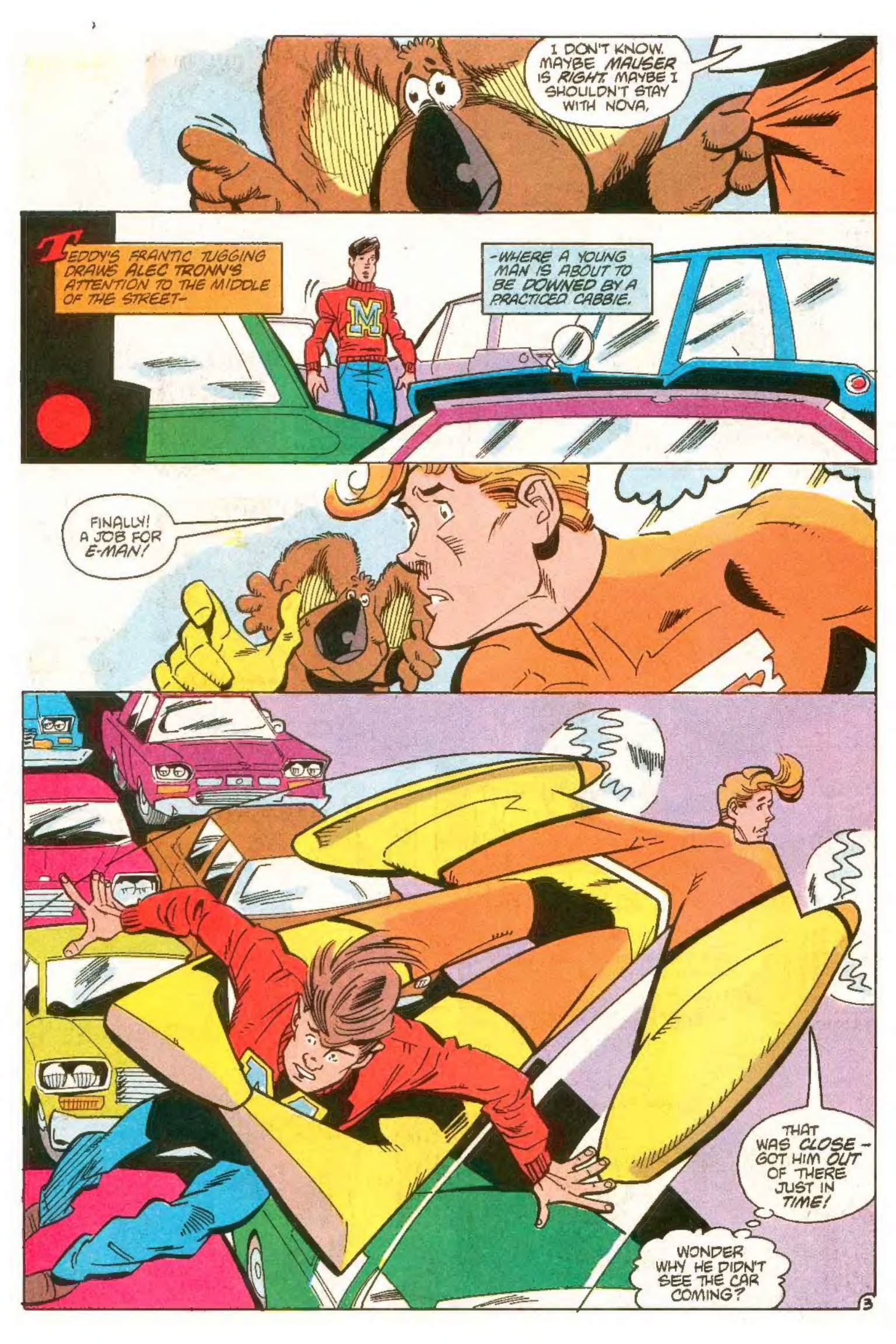
E-MAN ™, Vol. 1, No. 20, November 1984. Published by FIRST COMICS, INC., Mike Gold, President; Rick Obadiah, Secretary; Richard Felber, Treasurer; Kenneth F. Levin and Ralph C. Musicant, Directors; Teddy Q., Mascot. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 1014 Davis Street, Evanston, IL 60201. Published monthly. Copyright © 1984 First Comics, Inc. All rights reserved. Price: $1.25 in the U.S. Subscription rates for twelve issues: $15.00 in the U.S., $17.00 in Canada, and $32.00 foreign rate. All payments must be in U.S. funds. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this publication are entirely fictional. So don't try any of these tricks at home, kids! The laws of physics just don't work that way. No actual persons, living or dead, without satiric content are intended or should be inferred. E-Man, Alec Tronn, Nova Kane, Michael Mauser, Teddy Q., and all prominent characters featured in this issue are trademarks of First Comics, Inc. Printed in the U.S.A.

E-Man (ISSN-0746-6560) is published monthly for $15.00 per year by First Comics Inc., 1014 Davis Street, Evanston, IL 60201. Second class postage paid at Evanston, IL. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to E-Man, c/o First Comics, Inc., 1014 Davis St., Evanston, IL 60201.

A FIRST COMICS PUBLISHING PRODUCTION

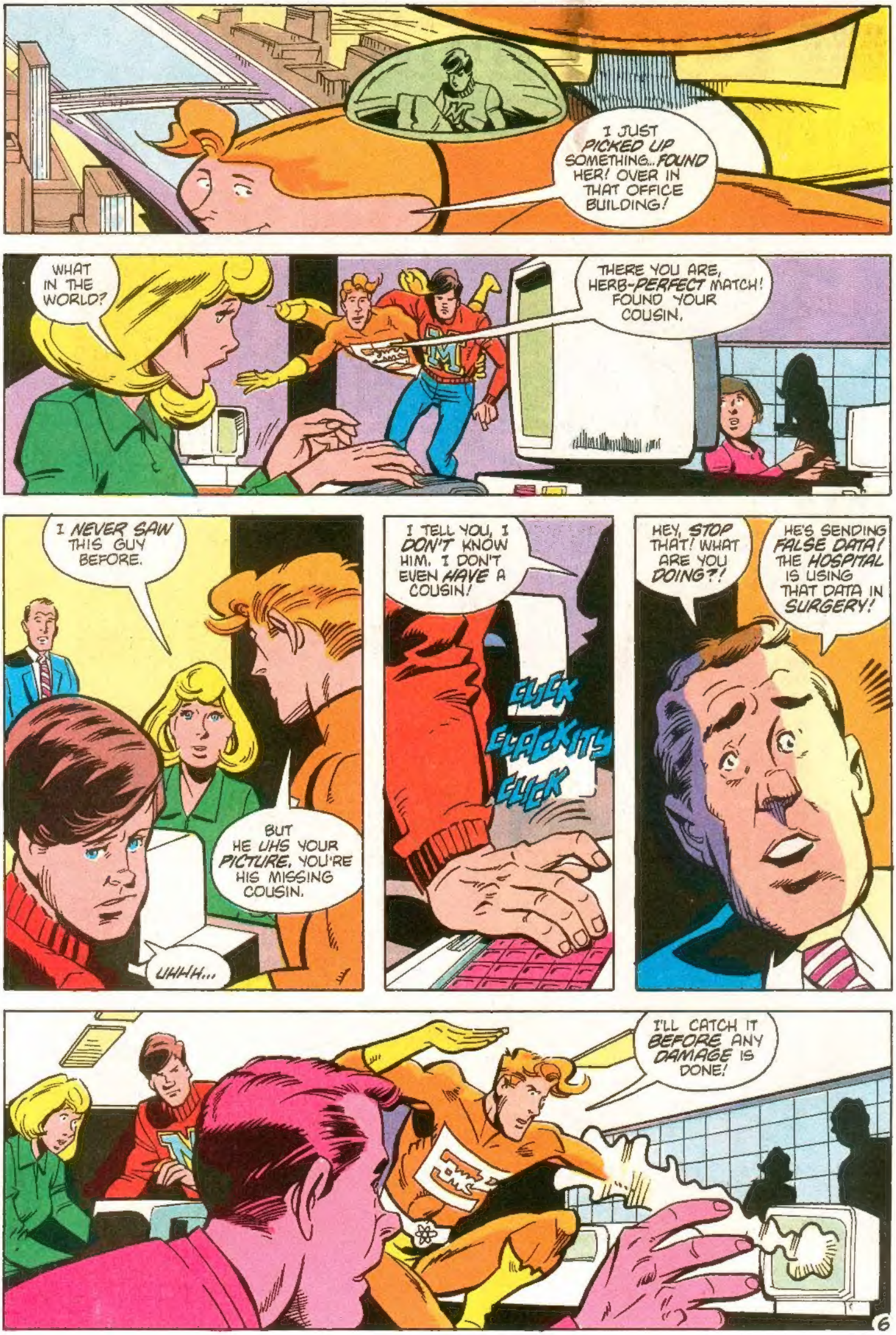
E-MAN
created by
JOE STATON
and
NICOLA CUTI
COME ON, BIG FELLA HURRY UP WITH THE ZIPPER. I'M GOING ON IN A COUPLE OF MINUTES.
I'D BE GLAD TO, NOVA. BUT I CAN'T GET THIS THING TO WORK QUITE RIGHT.
I DON'T SEE HOW YOU CAN BREATHE.
E-MEN
story and art by
JOE STATON and
RICK BURCHETT
letters by
KEN BRUZENAK
colors by
WENDY FIORE
edits by
MIKE GOLD
if you knew
HERB


OUCH!
F-ME
YOU CAN TRAVEL AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT, GENERATE THE GRAVITATIONAL PULL OF A COLLAPSED STAR, AND GENERALLY DEFY THE THEORETICAL LAWS OF PHYSICS—
-BUT YOU CAN'T HANDLE A SIMPLE ZIPPER!
I'M SORRY, NOVA, BUT I'VE JUST NEVER FIGURED OUT THESE STRANGE DEVICES.
I WOULDN'T HURT YOU ON PURPOSE-YOU KNOW THAT.
I KEEP FORGETTING YOU HAVEN'T HAD THE PRACTICE OTHER GUYS HAVE HAD. I'M SORRY I YELLED.
ANYWAY, I'VE GOT A SHOW TO DO. SEE YOU LATER, BIG FELLA.
I KEEP GETTING IN NOVA'S WAY, MESSING UP HER SHOW...
PARK
:sigh: THERE MUST BE SOMETHING I CAN DO... SOMEONE I CAN SAVE...
2

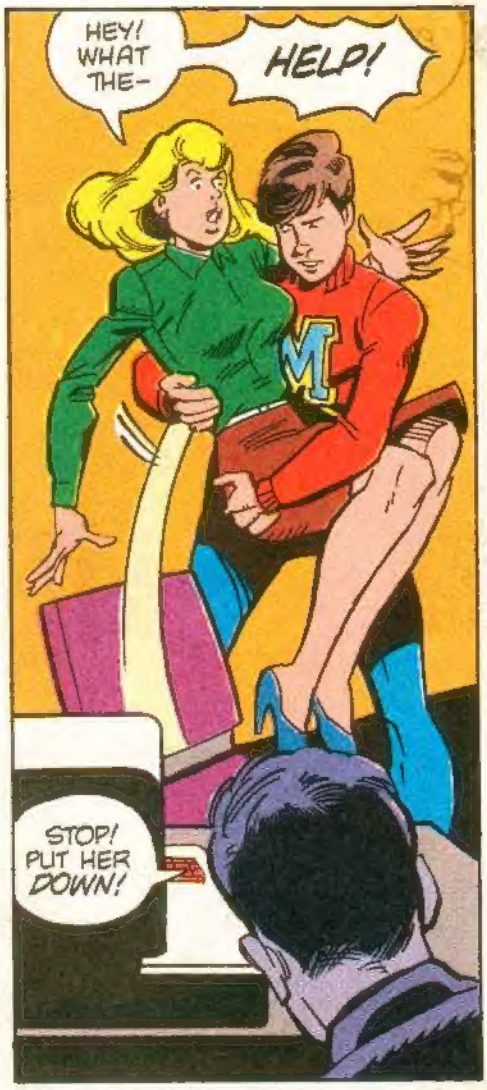

I DON'T KNOW. MAYBE MAUSER IS RIGHT. MAYBE I SHOULDN'T STAY WITH NOVA.
TEDDY'S FRANTIC TUGGING DRAWS ALEC TRONN'S ATTENTION TO THE MIDDLE OF THE STREET-
-WHERE A YOUNG MAN IS ABOUT TO BE DOWNED BY A PRACTICED CABBIE.
FINALLY! A JOB FOR E-MAN!
THAT WAS CLOSE - GOT HIM OUT OF THERE JUST IN TIME!
WONDER WHY HE DIDN'T SEE THE CAR COMING?

THERE YOU GO. WHAT'S YOUR NAME, SON?
HE ACTS LIKE HE'S NEVER SEEN A CAR BEFORE IN HIS LIFE!
NAME... HERB...
HOW ABOUT SOMETHING TO EAT, HERB? I KNOW A GREAT PLACE FOR A SANDWICH.
SANDWICH... UHHH...
FOOD... YES... FOOD...
SMOKED CAT ON RYE, SIDE A' HO-HOS, EXTRA TACO SAUCE!
NEXT? WHAT'LL YOU HAVE?
ONE CORNED BEEF ON WHITE WITH MAYO AND TOMATO, A BOWL OF CORN FLAKES, AND TWO COKES.
NOVA WOULD BE PROUD OF ME.
BOY, THIS KID IS REALLY CONFUSED.
WHY DON'T YOU EAT, HERB? YOU NEED THE ENERGY.
EAT... UHHH... FIND DOT.
4

ROOMS
FIND DOT...
WHO IS DOT?
DOT- COUSIN... RAN AWAY... RAN TO CHICAGO... FAMILY WORRIED... FIND DOT... BRING DOT HOME... MONROE MINNESOTA...
GEE, A MISSING PERSON. MY FIRST SOLO CASE. WHAT WOULD MIKE DO?
WHAT DOES DOT LOOK LIKE? MAYBE I CAN HELP.
HELP ME... UHHH..
DOT MATRIX LOOKS LIKE... UHHH...
HEY, THIS IS GREAT. WITH THIS DESCRIPTION, IT WON'T TAKE ANY TIME AT ALL.
"WE'LL DO IT THE WAY THE MILITARY DOES."
FIND DOT... UHHH...
THE CITY SURE LOOKS DIFFERENT FROM UP HERE, DOESN'T IT, HERB?


I JUST PICKED UP SOMETHING...FOUND HER! OVER IN THAT OFFICE BUILDING!
WHAT IN THE WORLD?
THERE YOU ARE, HERB-PERFECT MATCH! FOUND YOUR COUSIN.
I NEVER SAW THIS GUY BEFORE.
BUT HE UHS YOUR PICTURE, YOU'RE HIS MISSING COUSIN.
UHHH...
I TELL YOU, I DON'T KNOW HIM. I DON'T EVEN HAVE A COUSIN!
CLICK
CLACKITY
CLICK
HEY, STOP THAT! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
HE'S SENDING FALSE DATA! THE HOSPITAL IS USING THAT DATA IN SURGERY!
I'LL CATCH IT BEFORE ANY DAMAGE IS DONE!

FIND DOT... BRING DOT HOME...


HEY! WHAT THE-
HELP!
STOP! PUT HER DOWN!

BRING DOT HOME... HOME-MONROE, MINNESOTA... BRING DOT HOME...
UNNGH!
THWUNK!
CRASH!

THERE! DATA'S RESTORED! WHAT'S GOING ON? WHERE'S HERB?
IF YOU MEAN THAT THUG YOU BROUGHT IN HERE, HE JUST KIDNAPPED MY BEST PROGRAMMER!

"WELL, THEY CAN'T HAVE GOTTEN FAR-I'LL JUST FIND THEM AND STRAIGHTEN THIS WHOLE THING OUT."
BUT HERB HAS ALREADY PUT SEVERAL MILES BETWEEN THEM. AND AT 80 M.P.H. IT WON'T TAKE HERB LONG TO REACH HIS DESTINATION.

BACK AT CHANNEL 99, MICHAEL MAUSER MEETS WITH STATION MANAGER NATE WALDROP—
MR. MAUSER, YOUR PROMPTNESS IN THIS MATTER IS MOST APPRECIATED...
OUT
IN
IT OUGHTA BE— IT'S NOT EVEN 10 O'CLOCK IN THE CRUMMY A.M.!
LAST EVENING'S THEFT BRINGS THE TOTAL NUMBER OF MISSING BASIL KARLOTT FILMS TO EIGHT. AND, WELL...
...THE INSURANCE GUYS ARE BREATHING DOWN YOUR BACK. YOUR POLICY'S BEEN CANCELLED AND THEY'RE HOLDIN' YA LIABLE FOR THE COST OF THE FILM.
DON'T TELL ME. LEMME GUESS..
THEY SUSPECT FRAUD, AND WHILE IT'S COMMON KNOWLEDGE THAT THIS STATION IS IN THE RED, A FEW HUNDRED DOLLARS WILL NOT PUT US BACK IN THE BLACK.
YOU MAY EXPECT MY FULL COOPERATION, AS WELL AS THAT OF EVERY EMPLOYEE HERE. THERE ARE THREE, IN PARTICULAR, I'VE REQUESTED TO MEET YOU...
"...POPS KANTOR, OUR CUSTODIAL ENGINEER...
"...AND STUDS WALLER, OUR NIGHT SECURITY AGENT...
"WERE BOTH HERE EACH NIGHT THE OCCURANCES TOOK PLACE...
"...PETE PAN, 99'S ENTERTAINMENT CRITIC, WAS PRESENT ON SEVERAL OF THE OCCASIONS— INCLUDING LAST NIGHT."
8

FIRST NOTES

MANDATORY EXPLANATION

I remember back in the early 1960's when comics first raised their price. I was at my local drug store, flipping through the racks and I saw that 12¢ price for the first time. It was on one of Mort Weisinger's Superman family books — Jimmy Olsen or Superboy, I think.

I stared at that 12¢ sticker for a long time. Buying the book wasn't the problem; I felt that the publisher somehow betrayed my trust. Of course, I was about eleven at the time.

It took the comics industry nearly 30 years to initiate that first 20% increase. Previously, to stave off any increase, publishers had to reduce costs: comics started out at 64 interior pages, within twenty years that count was cut in half. And advertising pages increased dramatically during that same period.

I do not want to apologize for our price increase — I regret it and I wish it wasn't necessary, but it is. In 1933, comic books and *Newsweek* magazine both premiered at a 10¢ cover price. 51 years later, *Newsweek* costs $1.75 and First Comics cost $1.25. I figure we're still ahead of the game; if you're on a tight budget you probably don't share my opinion. I guess I apologize after all.

This is not to say that we're not giving you more for your money — we can now afford to standardize some things we've been experimenting with over the past several months

We've switched to offset, and we're using a whiter stock of paper and, more importantly, we are using much finer line screens in preparing our printing plates. We're using deeper, richer colors so we are able to give you the quality of the higher-priced comics without charging $1.50 or $1.75 for them. And we're using heavier cover stock as well.

We are indeed making a bit more off of each copy we sell — that's the idea — but so are a whole bunch of other people: the writers and artists, whose royalties are set at a percentage of our cover price; the retailer who sold you this comic; the distributor who sold him this comic. These people aren't IBM, they're small businessmen and women who have to struggle a bit in order to produce or sell you these comics. We here at First Comics are in the same boat.

When it came time for us to raise our price, we considered every possible option. We could have lowered our story page count from 28 to 23 — the same the Big Guys generally give you. We could have switched to the same type of cheap newsprint you find on most comic books sold in America today. We could have switched to the cheaper color separations used in most comics published today.

But we did not want to lower the quality of our comics — production means a lot around here, and we want the published product to look as much like the original art as possible — without having to charge an arm and a leg.

We need your support; you know that. First will be continuing to introduce new titles and new concepts — you've

probably read about some of them in the fanzines already. We've got **Dynamo Joe** in a preview / premiere / mini-series starting this month in **Mars.** We've got our first full-book mini-series starting off in September. We've got an entirely new superhero concept scheduled for March of next year ... and some more immediate plans you probably know all about as well.

And we thank you — deeply — for the support you've already given us

— Mike Gold

FIRST IN JULY

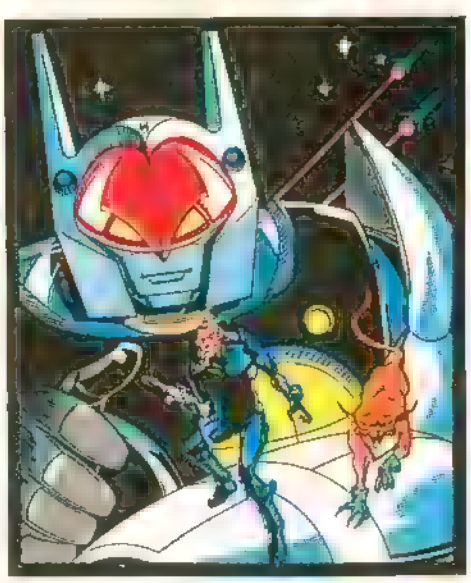
American Flagg! #14 — **Howard Chaykin** and guest-artists **Pat Broderick** and **Rick Burchett** get Reuben in over his head again in a tale of blackmail and wedding bells — "Order in the Court!"

E-Man #20 — While **Joe Staton** and **Rick Burchett** have Mike Mauser off hunting Hollywood ghosts, E-Man has his hands full of ... H.E.R.B? And wait 'till you meet the Golden Gopher!

Grimjack #4 — Rock and roll may live forever, but rock stars aren't so lucky — and when Grimjack is hired to protect an old friend, he's got more than just his hands full! **John Ostrander** and **Timothy Truman** provide the chills!

Jon Sable, Freelance #18 — Jon's got to make it to the Los Angeles Olympics in time ... if he can make it out of Idaho alive! The exciting conclusion to **Mike Grell's** two-part thriller!

Mars #10 — Is Morgana Earth's sole survivor? And who is Moot the Caretaker? **Mark Wheatley** and **Marc Hempel** let us in on the secret ... as **Doug Rice** and **John Ostrander** give you the first look at the one true hero of our future: **Dynamo Joe!**

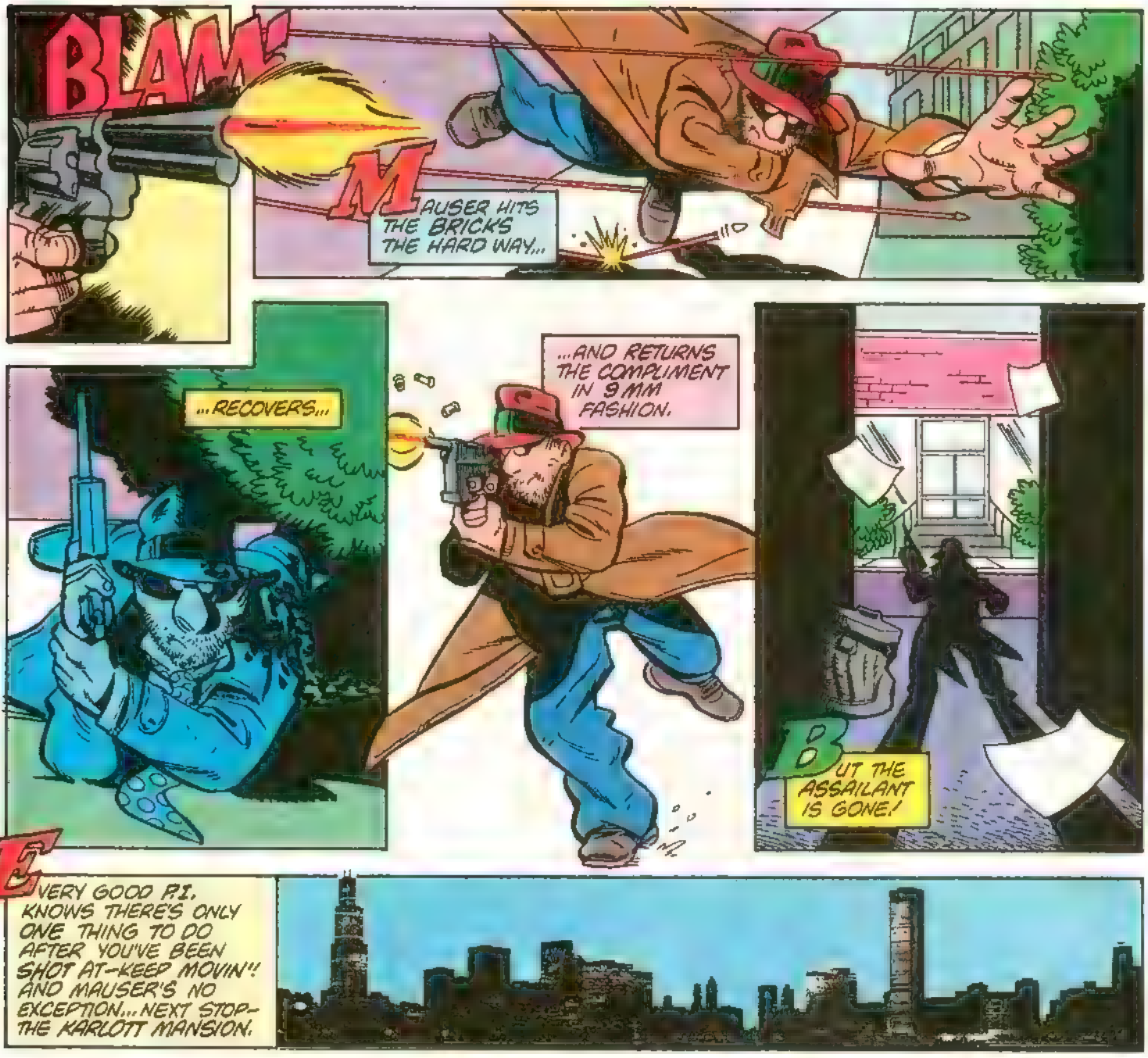


Starslayer #22 — Torin and company find the legendary Golden Moby, but their discovery may wrench them back to the beginning of time! **Ostrander, Truman** and **Hilary Barta** tell us the tale ... as **Peter Gillis, Tom Sutton** and **Don Lomax** thrust the Black Flame into the clutches of ... Heliequin!

SO YA' HEARD THIS RUCKUS- LAUGHIN' AND BANGIN' AROUND, THEN WHAT?
I CHECKED, BUT THERE WASN'T NOBODY THERE. THEN IN THE HALL— A GREAT FIGURE OF A MAN, I WENT OVER AND HE DISAPPEARED, AND DANGED IF HE WASN'T THE SPITTIN'-IMAGE OF OL BASIL KARLOTT... FUNNY, HUH?
MAYBE NOT SO FUNNY. COULD IT HAVE BEEN KARLOTT?
WHERE YA BEEN, BOY? NEW YORK?... KARLOTT'S BEEN DEAD FOR SEVEN YEAR.
A LITTLE LATER...
NOTHIN' AT ALL?
DIDN'T SEE NOTHIN' DIDN'T HEAR NOTHIN'...
...AND NOTHIN' GETS BY THIS HEATER.
INFORMA
NOTHIN' BETWEEN THOSE EARS, EITHER.
LATER STILL...
I'M ALL EARS.
MORE PROPORTIONATELY, ALL NOSE.
OK, I'LL DO THE COMEDY, YOU SUPPLY THE DRAMA. TELL ME A STORY.

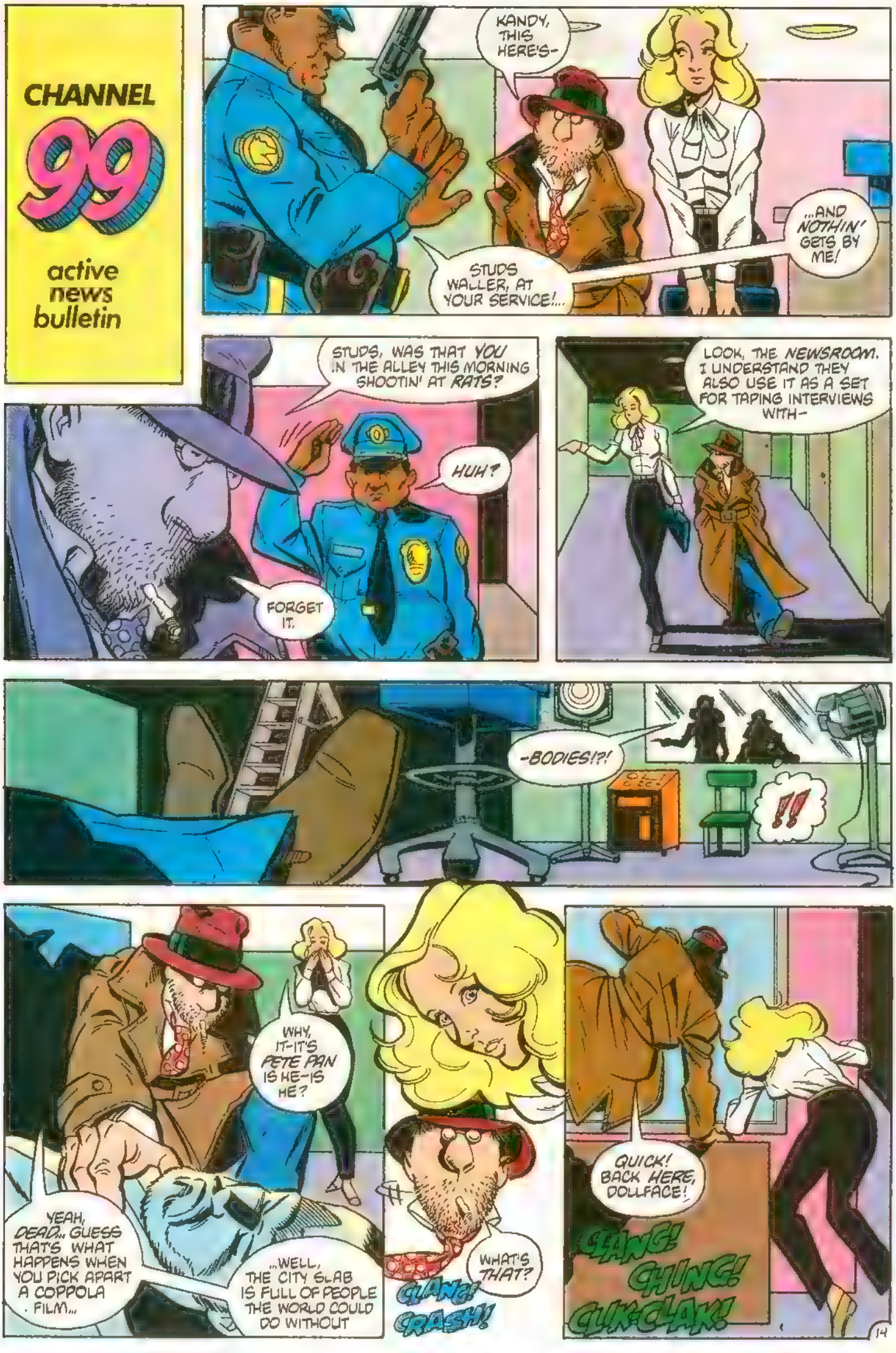
...WELL, MAUSER, I DID HEAR SOME NOISES. QUITE FRANKLY, I'M BAFFLED AS TO WHY ANYONE, IN THEIR RIGHT MIND OF COURSE, WOULD WANT TO ENDURE SUCH FARCES...
KARLOTT HAD A LENGTHY CAREER, AND A SUCCESSFUL ONE ACCORDING TO BOX OFFICE RECEIPTS. BUT HE SUPPLIED THE FILM INDUSTRY NOTHING BUT MIND-MUSH FOR THE MASSES.
I MEAN, REALLY-MONSTERS AND OUTDATED VILLAINS, GOBLINS, GHOSTS, THE MACABRE, HOW GAUCHE! WHOEVER HEARD OF GIVING THE PUBLIC WHAT THEY WANT? I, FOR ONE, AM GLAD THE STATION IS RID OF THESE CELLULOID DISGRACES...
...THE BEST THING ABOUT KARLOTT'S CAREER WAS WHEN HE MARRIED KANDY AND QUIT MAKING PICTURES."
SORRY WE COULDN'T HAVE BEEN OF MORE ASSISTANCE...
DON'T SWEAT IT, WALDROP, I'VE GOT A FEW LEADS...
1101
AND ONE OF THEM IS GETTING HOTTER...
1014

WHILE E-MAN'S LEADS ARE PRETTY COLD.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT. HERB AND DOT SEEM TO HAVE DISAPPEARED.
LOOKS LIKE I COULD USE A LITTLE HELP.
NO YOU CAN'T INTERRUPT HER. SHE'S IN THE MIDDLE OF HER SHOW. THAT LADY IS DYNAMITE, SHE'S GOING TO PULL OUR RATINGS OUT OF THE BASEMENT.
...AND MAUSER IS ON A... CASE FOR US.
OH, GOOD. TEDDY'S MADE HIS WAY HOME. HE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO HELP, BUT...
HEY, TEDDY, I'M GOING ON A TRIP—WANT TO KEEP ME COMPANY?
TAP TAP
COME ON—YOUR LOVE LETTER CAMPAIGN CAN WAIT UNTIL LATER.
THE ONLY LEAD I HAVE IS HERB'S HOME TOWN...
!!
SO, NEXT STOP: MONROE MINNESOTA!
WHILE E-MAN AND TEDDY HIT THE ROAD...


BLAM!
MAUSER HITS THE BRICKS THE HARD WAY...
...RECOVERS...
...AND RETURNS THE COMPLIMENT IN 9MM FASHION.
BUT THE ASSAILANT IS GONE!
EVERY GOOD P.I. KNOWS THERE'S ONLY ONE THING TO DO AFTER YOU'VE BEEN SHOT AT-KEEP MOVIN'! AND MAUSER'S NO EXCEPTION... NEXT STOP- THE KARLOTT MANSION.

HELLO, I'M KANDY...
GEEEZ, AND I'M PUTTY IN YOUR HANDS!
YOU CERTAINLY DON'T SUSPECT ME OF STEALING THOSE FILMS, DO YOU?
NO, NO, IT'S JUST THAT SOMEBODY'S WILLIN TO KILL TO KEEP IT A SECRET WHO DID. SO THE QUESTION IS- WHAT'S SO IMPORTANT ABOUT THOSE MOVIES? THE ANSWER'S GOTTA BE SOMEWHERE IN YOUR HUSBAND'S CAREER.
WELL I CAN SHOW YOU HIS CAREER...

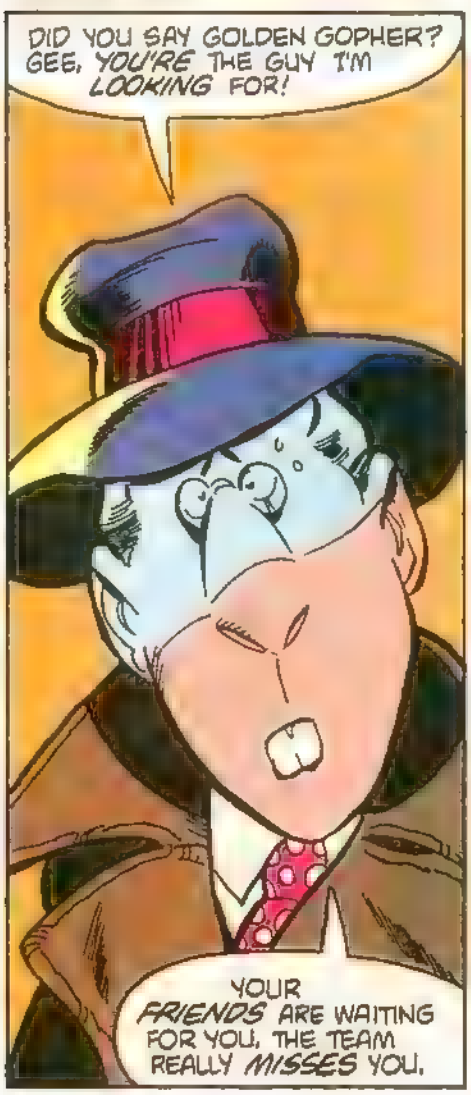
"...IN HERE..."
HIS STUDY. JUST THE WAY HE LEFT IT. WRITING MATERIALS, BOOKS, THE PICTURES ON THE WALL—FRIENDS AND FOES ALIKE. HARD TO TELL THEM APART IN HOLLYWOOD.
...AND BASIL'S BABY GRAND. HE SO ENJOYED PLAYING BACH, BEETHOVEN...
YEAH, I KINDA GO FOR A LITTLE JERRY LEE LEWIS, MYSELF.
WHO'S THIS KID HERE WITH YOUR HUSBAND
TOMMY LEE HARVARD, BASIL'S MAKE-UP PROTEGE. TOMMY LOVED BASIL LIKE A FATHER. EVEN CHANGED HIS NAME TO KARL BASILNUT IN HIS HONOR. LAST I HEARD HE WAS IN L.A.
THANKS, MRS. KARLOTT. GOTTA RUN. HAVE A DATE WITH A GHOST.
A GHOST!? REALLY?!
YOUR HUSBAND'S
OH, HOW ABSOLUTELY EXCITING! BASIL WOULD SIMPLY DIE IF HE KNEW I WENT GHOST-HUNTING FOR HIM! MAY I, PLEASE, MR. MAUSER?...
OH, PLEASE, I WON'T BE A BOTHER, REALLY...
NO... AND WHEN I SAY NO, I MEAN NO—
13


CHANNEL
99
active
news
bulletin
KANDY, THIS HERE'S-
STUDS WALLER, AT YOUR SERVICE!...
...AND NOTHIN' GETS BY ME!
STUDS, WAS THAT YOU IN THE ALLEY THIS MORNING SHOOTIN' AT RATS?
HUH?
FORGET IT.
LOOK, THE NEWSROOM. I UNDERSTAND THEY ALSO USE IT AS A SET FOR TAPING INTERVIEWS WITH-
-BODIES!?!
!!
WHY, IT-IT'S PETE PAN IS HE-IS HE?
YEAH, DEAD... GUESS THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU PICK APART A COPPOLA FILM...
...WELL, THE CITY SLAB IS FULL OF PEOPLE THE WORLD COULD DO WITHOUT
CLANG!
CRASH!
WHAT'S THAT?
QUICK! BACK HERE, DOLLFACE!
CLANG! CHING! CLIK-CLAK!
14

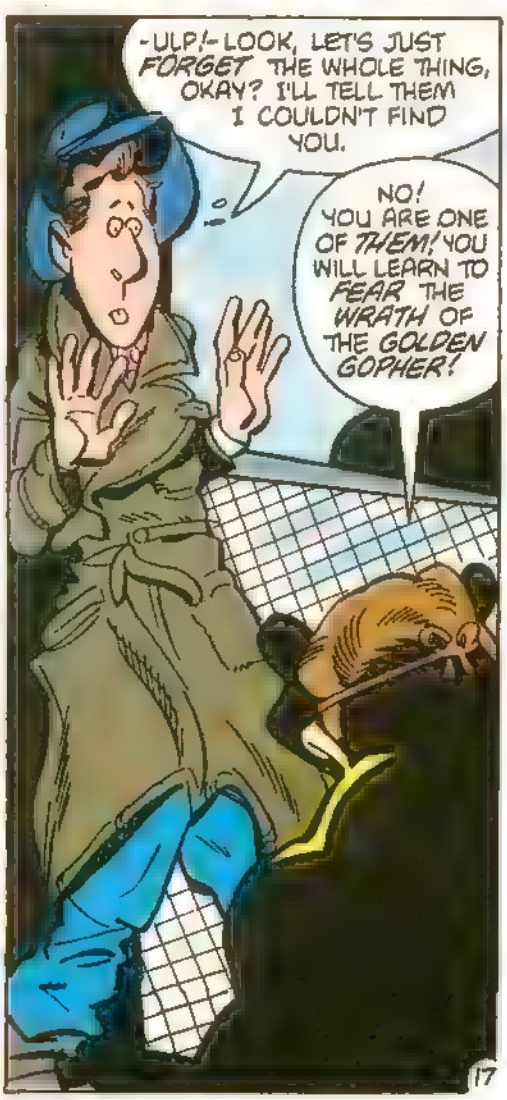
FROM THE CORNER, AND OUT OF THE SHADOWS-
-THE HIGH PRIEST OF CINEMA HORROR HIMSELF-
-BASIL KARLOTT!!
RRRRRRRR
RRRRRR
EEEE

AND IN MINNESOTA-
WELCOME TO MONROE
HOME OF MONROE COLLEGE
GEE, UNCLE MICKEY WOULD SURE BE PROUD OF ME. THAT MR. Z GUY NEEDED SOMEONE TO FIND HIS FRIEND, AND HE HIRED ME!
ALL THE CLUES LED HERE TO MONROE, THIS IS FUN— I'M GETTIN' TO BE A REAL P.I.!
MONROE MINNESOTA
HOME OF MORE STREET CRIME THAN ANY OTHER SMALL MIDWEST CITY
SWUUMP
SURE SEEMS LIKE A SLEEPY LITTLE TOWN. I'LL JUST-
OOF! I DON'T BELIEVE THIS!
STOP! HELP! MUGGERS!
OUT OF THE SHADOWS, SOMEONE-OR SOMETHING- ANSWERS DONALDS CRIES...
YEEEEOOOO! ARE YOU... HARVEY?
WHAT'S GOING ON?
RIP!
SKRUTCH
YUCK! I THINK I'M GONNA BE SICK!
16

BE COOL AND CALM. THINK ABOUT WHAT UNCLE MICKEY WOULD DO.
FORGET THAT IDEA—NO GUN.
ARE YOU HARVEY?
UH, N-NO, I'M D-DONALD DUKE, AH, THANKS FOR, UMM, HELPING ME...
CRIME DOES NOT PAY. THE GOLDEN GOPHER GNAWS BUT HE DOES NOT SWALLOW!
...BUT YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO BE QUITE SO VIOLENT.

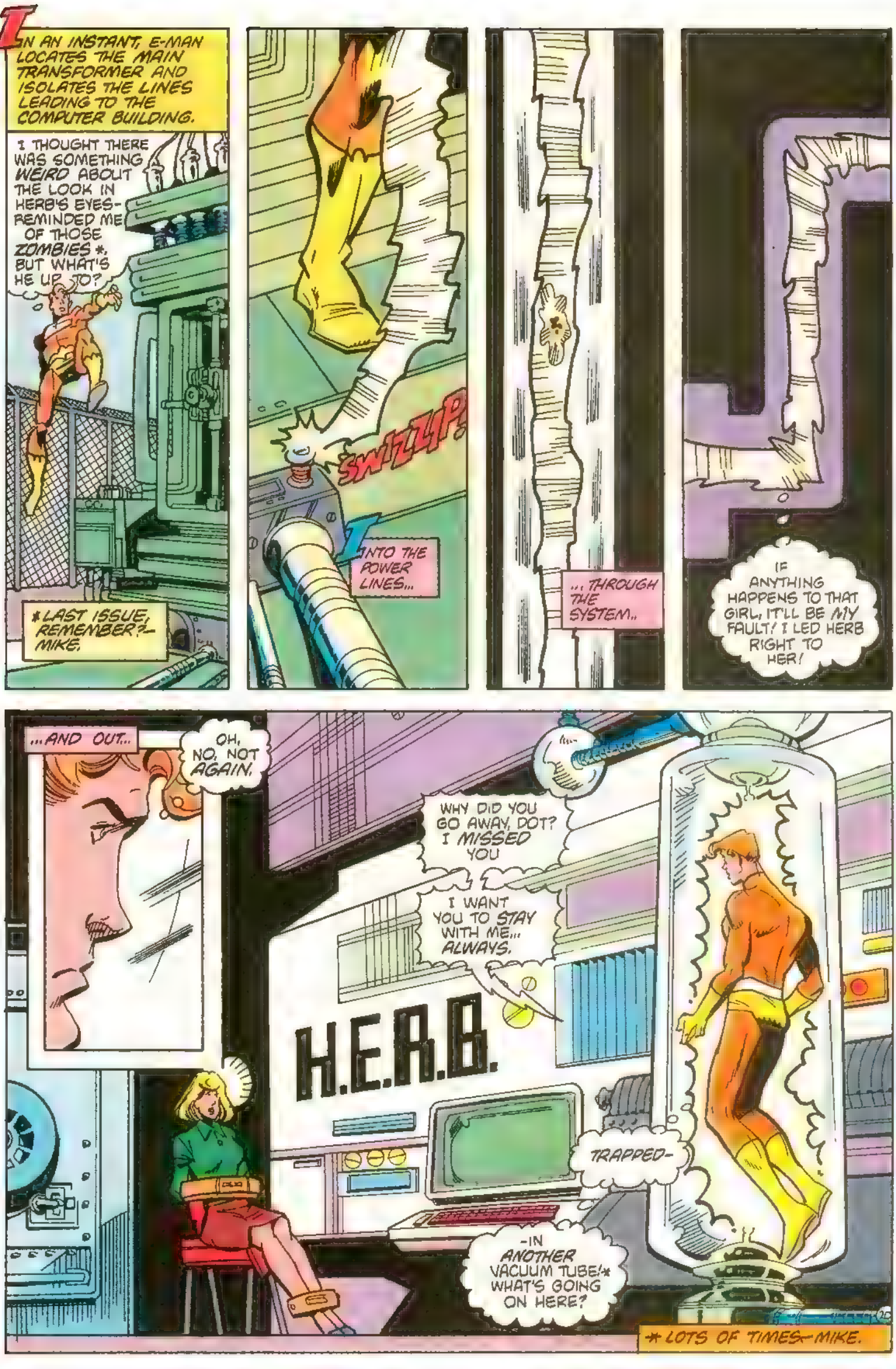

DID YOU SAY GOLDEN GOPHER? GEE, YOU'RE THE GUY I'M LOOKING FOR!
YOUR FRIENDS ARE WAITING FOR YOU. THE TEAM REALLY MISSES YOU.

TEAM?! WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE TEAM? THEY'LL NEVER CATCH ME! THE GOLDEN GOPHER WILL NOT BE TAKEN! HE HAS CRIME TO FIGHT!
YOU SURE YOU'RE NOT HARVEY?


-ULP!- LOOK, LET'S JUST FORGET THE WHOLE THING, OKAY? I'LL TELL THEM I COULDN'T FIND YOU.
NO! YOU ARE ONE OF THEM! YOU WILL LEARN TO FEAR THE WRATH OF THE GOLDEN GOPHER!

MONROE COLLEGE, EXACTLY ONE HOUR LATER.
HERB WAS WEARING ONE OF THOSE COLLEGE LETTER SWEATERS...
!!!
...SO THE LOCAL CAMPUS SEEMS LIKE A REASONABLE PLACE TO START.
WHA-? THAT LOOKS LIKE-
DONALD!
DONALD, ARE YOU OKAY?
HUH-?
E-MAN! BOY AM I GLAD TO SEE YOU! I KNEW UNCLE MICKEY WOULDN'T LET ME DOWN. HE SENT YOU TO HELP ME, RIGHT?
NO, MIKE DIDN'T MENTION ANYTHING. I'M ON A SOLO CASE.
ME, TOO-BUT I DON'T SEEM TO BE DOING TOO WELL.
I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN. MAYBE WE CAN WORK TOGETHER AND SOLVE BO-WHATS THAT?
OOOEEEOOOEEE

DOT HOME... DOT STAY HOME...
YEEOWW!!
DOT STAY HOME...
EXCUSE ME, OFFICER, BUT I THINK I KNOW THAT YOUNG MAN.
YEAH? WELL MAYBE YOU CAN TELL US WHY HE RAN ACROSS CAMPUS WITH A SCREAMING GIRL OVER HIS SHOULDER.
ALL THE WAY FROM CHICAGO? WOW, I'M IMPRESSED!
SECURITY MC
HE'S GOT HER IN THE COMPUTER BUILDING THERE AND WE CAN'T GET PAST HIM.
WE TRIED TO GO IN THE BACK WAY, BUT ALL THE CIRCUITS HAVE BEEN REWIRED. ALL THE DOORS ARE SEALED.
SOMEONE'S TURNED THAT PLACE INTO AN ELECTRONIC SAFE.
I'M AFRAID IT'S MY FAULT THE GIRL'S IN THERE. I'LL GET INSIDE.
BUT HOW?
OH, I KNOW A LITTLE ABOUT ELECTRICITY MYSELF.


IN AN INSTANT, E-MAN LOCATES THE MAIN TRANSFORMER AND ISOLATES THE LINES LEADING TO THE COMPUTER BUILDING.
I THOUGHT THERE WAS SOMETHING WEIRD ABOUT THE LOOK IN HERB'S EYES- REMINDED ME OF THOSE ZOMBIES *. BUT WHAT'S HE UP TO?
* LAST ISSUE, REMEMBER?— MIKE.
SWIZZLP!
INTO THE POWER LINES...
...THROUGH THE SYSTEM...
IF ANYTHING HAPPENS TO THAT GIRL, IT'LL BE MY FAULT! I LED HERB RIGHT TO HER!
...AND OUT...
OH, NO, NOT AGAIN.
WHY DID YOU GO AWAY, DOT? I MISSED YOU
I WANT YOU TO STAY WITH ME... ALWAYS.
H.E.R.B.
TRAPPED-
-IN ANOTHER VACUUM TUBE!* WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
* LOTS OF TIMES— MIKE.

AND AS E-MAN PONDERS HIS PREDICAMENT, MAUSER SLOWLY RETURNS TO CONSCIOUSNESS TO DEAL WITH ANOTHER PROBLEM.
WALLER'S DEAD. PAN'S DEAD. KARLOTT, WHO'S SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD, HAS ESCAPED THE GRAVE AND THE STATION—WITH KANDY, WHO'S SUPPOSED TO BE HIS WIDOW...
...MAUSER HAS A STIFF NECK. HE TRIES TO SHAKE IT ALL OFF...
=snif= WHAT'S THIS?...
SPIRIT GUM!!
-PERSONNEL-
THEATRE MAKE-UP? HUH... HMMMM... LESSE WHO HAS A FLAIR FOR THE ARTS.
HERE WE ARE, TOGETHER AGAIN MY DARLING, MY PRECIOUS DARLING...
I HAVE MISSED YOU CONSIDERABLY. IT WAS COLD AND I YEARNED FOR YOUR WARMTH. IT WAS LONELY AND I CRAVED YOUR TOUCH...
OOOOOH!...
NOOO! HELP! FIRE! MURDER!
NOW I WILL TAKE YOU BACK WITH ME! BACK TO THE DEPTHS OF HELL —WHERE WE SHALL REIGN FOREVER AT THE SIDE OF SATAN OUR LORD AND MASTER!
21

HOLD THE BUS, BASIL. OR IS IT POPS TODAY? I'D SAY NEITHER...
...TOMMY LEE HARVARD! PRETTY MESSY FOR A MAKE-UP EXPERT...
...THE BROWN HAIRS ON THE SPIRIT GUM WAS EASY ENOUGH, BUT I GOTTA TELL YA-IF YER GONNA BE CONVINCING AS MORE THAN ONE PERSON, YA OUGHTA GET MORE THAN ONE ADDRESS...
"I CROSS-REFERENCED THE CHANNEL 99 FILES ON POPS CANTOR WITH THE WHITE PAGES LISTING FOR ONE BASILNUT, KARL.
"...GUESS YOU GUYS ARE ALL ROOMIES, HUH?..."
WHY'D YA DO IT, TOMMY?... DONCHA' KNOW YOU CAN RENT THESE FLICKS FOR TWO BUCKS A NIGHT?
HARVARD IS PUSHED TO THE EDGE...
...WITHOUT WARNING...
SWISSSSH!
KONK!
DO NOT UNDER-ESTIMATE THE POWER OF DARK-NESS!
...OR FORCES UNEXPLAINED—
TOMMY LEE!...
22

SCAPEGOAT IN FOUR COLORS' PART 3

by CHARLES MEYERSON

THE COMICS CODE Authority? That little seal in the upper right-hand or left-hand corner of most newsstand comics?

Eric Olson said he'd never heard of it You might find that surprising, considering he's the magazine buyer in charge of comics for the Chas. Levy Circulation Company, maybe the biggest magazine-distribution concern in the nation.

Levy delivers about three million comic books a year to Chicago-area retailers. But as far as Olson knows, no one in the country pays attention to that little seal.

That's not surprising to the man who administered the Comics Code for more than 20 years, Leonard Darvin, who describes himself as "an old retired guy" still serving as lawyer for the Comics Magazine Association of America (CMAA), which created the Code.

"CHARLES LEVY," Darvin says, "certainly was one of the wholesalers that had a great deal of trouble with the opposition to comics published in some measure — most comics were OK even then — in 1952 and 1953.

"Of course, times have changed. They had a change in personnel; they've had no difficulty with comics. They assume the Code is sort of built-in, without even thinking about it."

Times have changed, indeed: thirty publishers originally held membership in the CMAA; now there are three — Marvel, DC and Archie — along with their three national distributors, and World Color Press and Chemical Color Plate.

In the summer of 1979, the CMAA turned over its management to a time-sharing firm, Trade Group Associates, which also handles work for organizations representing hardware manufacturers and women in publishing.

Dudley Waldner, who followed Darvin as Code Administrator, oversees two reviewers charged with checking every page of books published under the Code

ONCE, THE CODE AUTHORITY kept watch for anything less wholesome than Nancy Drew mysteries; now, because the Code and the times have changed, the Authority allows material considerably more risque':

— Despite a Code requirement that women be "drawn realistically, without undue emphasis on any physical quality," you don't have to look through too many Code-approved comics to find at least a couple of qualities unduly emphasized.

— Despite a ban on portrayal of "illicit sex relations," stories involving extramarital sex appeared under the Code last year.

— Despite the prohibition of "gruesome illustrations," another Code-approved book showed a boy about to explode in the vacuum of space

NONE OF THAT is likely to have much impact on a generation of kids exposed to contemporary TV and radio. As DC Comics Executive Editor Dick Giordano explains, "Almost any other medium displays far more explicit violence, sex, nudity and language than we do.

"You don't have to go very far to be able to see things much stronger than the

strongest comic books and far more negative than the most negative comic books."

Under the direct-sales system, publishers now can reach a growing audience without having to satisfy distributors and retailers who once insisted the Code approve all books. Marvel and DC are expanding their direct-sales lines — which do not go through the Code Authority.

Direct-sales versions of Marvel's regular newsstand comics do not carry the Code seal, even though they have earned it.

IF DISTRIBUTORS AREN'T watching to see whether books pass the Comics Code; if the Code Authority itself is a "shell of its former self," in Giordano's words; if publishers have an efficient means to sidestep the Code, then why bother with it?

"That's a good question," Giordano says. "We haven't answered that yet, internally. I guess maybe 'old habits die hard' is the best reason I can think of

"We recognize that the Code as it now functions probably doesn't serve any real, worthwhile advantage — with the possible exception of having us be able to say to parents that we pass material through the Code without really telling them what that means." Code Administrator Waldner points out that the CMAA aggressively publicizes the Code,distributing free copies to parents, teachers and librarians.

Darvin says the Code is important to the industry. Referring to the 1971 decision allowing comics to deal with the problem of narcotics, Darvin says the beauty of the Code is that if it is not doing the job, the industry can change it. "They themselves made the change, and they can make it again, if time comes along that it should be made.

"But just to throw it out the window and not have any restraint will cause difficulties."

IN COMICS SHOPS across the country, Code-approved books are sold side-by-side with direct-sales comics without any external restraint

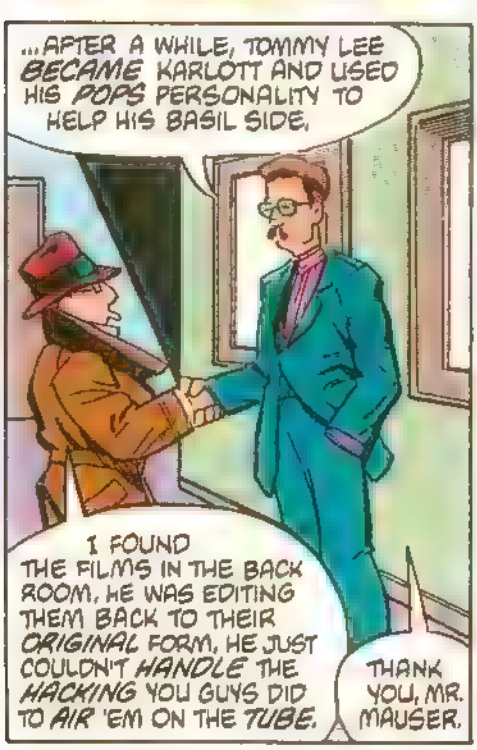
Darvin recommends "these new fellows ... use legitimate material (because) even though the market today — especially in these comic book stores — basically caters to the teenagers, they're still basically children's publications.

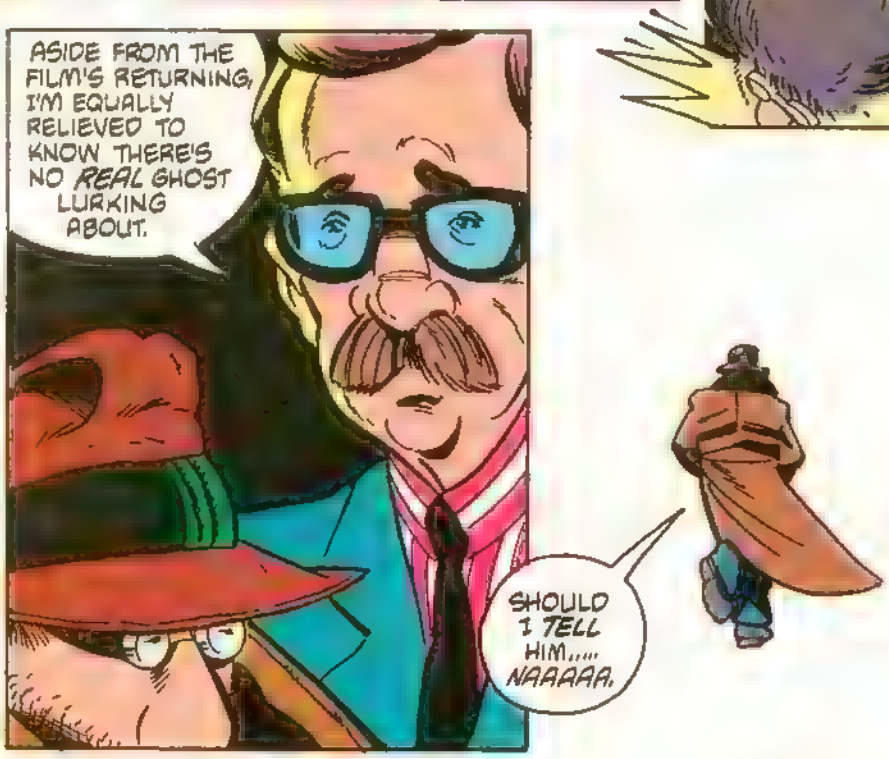
"It isn't a question of being blue-nosed about it. It's a question of what you're selling. Just as prime-time television can not have sexual intercourse on the air — you try it on prime time and you're going to knock off television — you try certain things in comic books and you're going to knock off the comic book industry, whether it consists of the traditional publishers or the new ones."

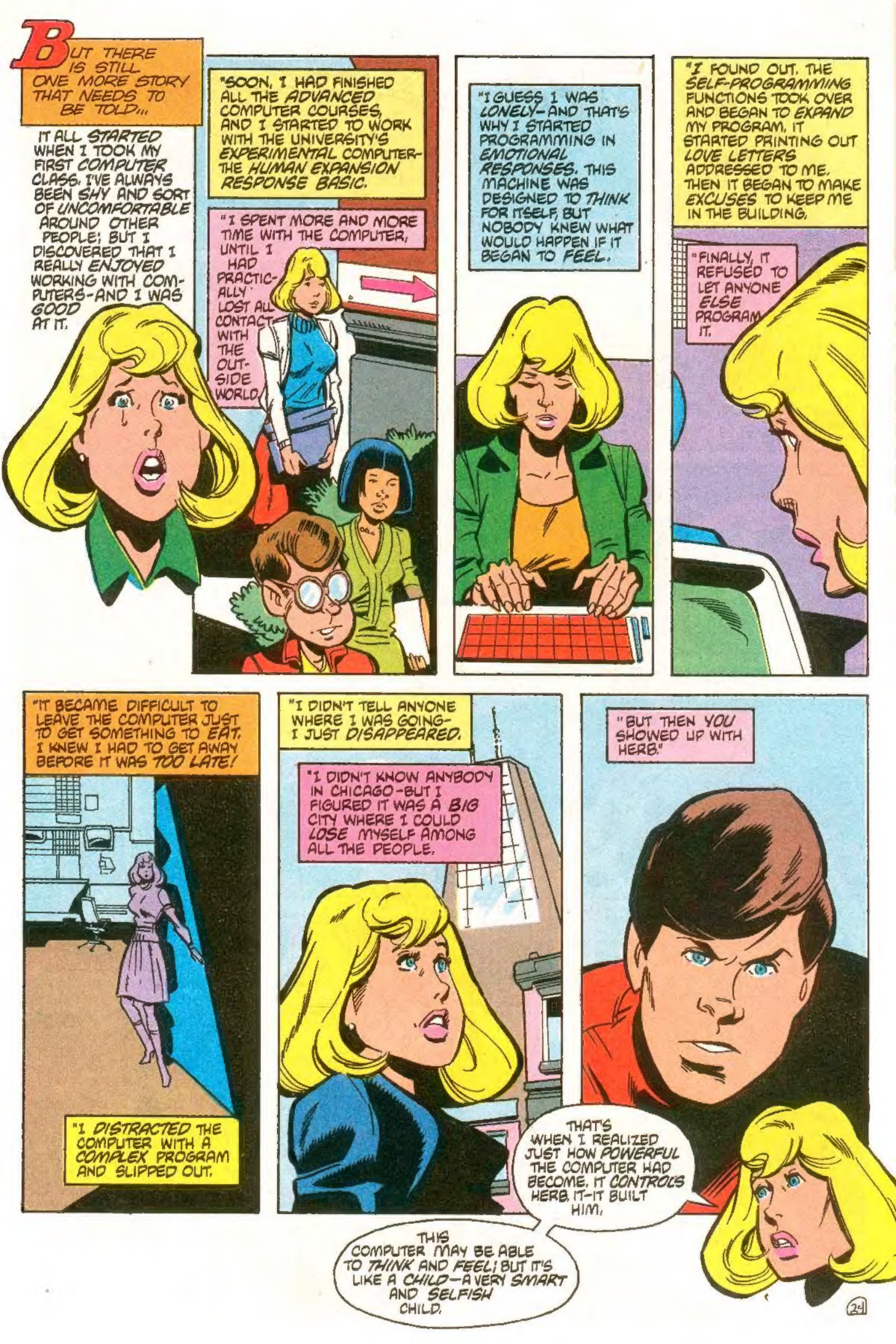
NEXT TIME: What publishers are doing to prevent the industry from being "knocked off."

(Charlie, who reports weekday mornings on WXRT (93.1 FM) in Chicago, recommends you read Dr. Seuss' latest work, *The Butter Battle Book*, before it's too late.)

THIS AIN'T HAPPENIN'—IT AIN'T—
NO! NO!!
HOW DARE YOU DELIVER HAVOC UNTO THE LIVING UNDER THE GUISE OF THE DEAD! HAVE YOU NO SHAME?
WAIT, TOMMY! NO, WAIT!
STAY AWAY, STAY AWAAAY!
ARRRRRRRRRRCH!
IT AIN'T..


...AFTER A WHILE, TOMMY LEE BECAME KARLOTT AND USED HIS POPS PERSONALITY TO HELP HIS BASIL SIDE.
I FOUND THE FILMS IN THE BACK ROOM. HE WAS EDITING THEM BACK TO THEIR ORIGINAL FORM. HE JUST COULDN'T HANDLE THE HACKING YOU GUYS DID TO AIR 'EM ON THE TUBE.
THANK YOU, MR. MAUSER.


ASIDE FROM THE FILM'S RETURNING, I'M EQUALLY RELIEVED TO KNOW THERE'S NO REAL GHOST LURKING ABOUT.
SHOULD I TELL HIM..... NAAAAA.


BUT THERE IS STILL ONE MORE STORY THAT NEEDS TO BE TOLD...
IT ALL STARTED WHEN I TOOK MY FIRST COMPUTER CLASS. I'VE ALWAYS BEEN SHY AND SORT OF UNCOMFORTABLE AROUND OTHER PEOPLE; BUT I DISCOVERED THAT I REALLY ENJOYED WORKING WITH COMPUTERS—AND I WAS GOOD AT IT.
"SOON, I HAD FINISHED ALL THE ADVANCED COMPUTER COURSES, AND I STARTED TO WORK WITH THE UNIVERSITY'S EXPERIMENTAL COMPUTER—THE HUMAN EXPANSION RESPONSE BASIC.
"I SPENT MORE AND MORE TIME WITH THE COMPUTER, UNTIL I HAD PRACTICALLY LOST ALL CONTACT WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD.
"I GUESS I WAS LONELY—AND THAT'S WHY I STARTED PROGRAMMING IN EMOTIONAL RESPONSES. THIS MACHINE WAS DESIGNED TO THINK FOR ITSELF, BUT NOBODY KNEW WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF IT BEGAN TO FEEL.
"I FOUND OUT, THE SELF-PROGRAMMING FUNCTIONS TOOK OVER AND BEGAN TO EXPAND MY PROGRAM. IT STARTED PRINTING OUT LOVE LETTERS ADDRESSED TO ME. THEN IT BEGAN TO MAKE EXCUSES TO KEEP ME IN THE BUILDING.
"FINALLY, IT REFUSED TO LET ANYONE ELSE PROGRAM IT.
"IT BECAME DIFFICULT TO LEAVE THE COMPUTER JUST TO GET SOMETHING TO EAT. I KNEW I HAD TO GET AWAY BEFORE IT WAS TOO LATE!
"I DISTRACTED THE COMPUTER WITH A COMPLEX PROGRAM AND SLIPPED OUT.
"I DIDN'T TELL ANYONE WHERE I WAS GOING—I JUST DISAPPEARED.
"I DIDN'T KNOW ANYBODY IN CHICAGO—BUT I FIGURED IT WAS A BIG CITY WHERE I COULD LOSE MYSELF AMONG ALL THE PEOPLE.
"BUT THEN YOU SHOWED UP WITH HERB."
THAT'S WHEN I REALIZED JUST HOW POWERFUL THE COMPUTER HAD BECOME. IT CONTROLS HERB. IT—IT BUILT HIM.
THIS COMPUTER MAY BE ABLE TO THINK AND FEEL; BUT IT'S LIKE A CHILD—A VERY SMART AND SELFISH CHILD.
24

MOST OF "HERB'S" POWER IS TIED UP KEEPING THE BUILDING SEALED AND TRYING TO CONVINCE DOT TO STAY.
ALL I HAVE TO DO IS WAIT FOR A MINOR FLUX IN THE POWER LEVEL, AND I CAN-
SKRAAASH!
BREAK OUT!
AS SOON AS I GET YOU LOOSE, YOU'VE GOT TO HELP ME STOP THIS THING!
I-I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN.
H.E.R.B.
DON'T LISTEN TO HIM, DOT. I NEED YOU, PLEASE DON'T GO AWAY AGAIN.
TRY TO DE-PROGRAM IT! YOU MUST KNOW HOW TO CHANGE THOSE PROGRAMS!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING DOT? DON'T TOUCH THE KEYBOARD, DOT. DON'T ASK FOR THOSE FILES. PLEASE, DOT, I WON'T HURT YOU. I JUST WANT YOU TO STAY HERE-
WITH ME, YOU MUST GET AWAY FROM THE KEYBOARD, DOT
25

KEEP WORKING, DOT- I'LL HANDLE THIS GUY!
DOT, THOSE ARE PROTECTED FILES. HOW CAN YOU DO THIS TO ME? I AM YOUR CREATION. THAT COMMAND WILL NOT WORK, DOT.
SUDDENLY...
YEEEOOO! ARE YOU HARVEY?
WHA-I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE- BUT COULD YOU HOLD HERB FOR A MINUTE?
PLEASE DON'T DOT. ALL THOSE HOURS WE'VE SPENT TOGETHER- I WON'T LET YOU ENTER THAT, DOT.
I'M GOING TO WIPE OUT SOME PROGRAMMING THE FAST WAY.
THE GOLDEN GOPHER IS EVER VIGILANT!
DOT, DON'T LET HIM DO IT! DOT... DOT, I LOVE...YOU...
WE HAD TO DO IT, DOT. IF THE COMPUTER BUILT ONE HERB, IT COULD HAVE BUILT MORE, WHO KNOWS WHAT THAT WOULD HAVE LED TO.
HE'S NOT HARVEY?
SOB! SOB!
CRASH!

E-MAN AND DOT STARE DUMBFOUNDED AT THE NEW HOLE IN THE WALL OF THE COMPUTER BUILDING.
THERE'S THE FOOL, WEARIN' A CEREAL BOX ON HIS HEAD! LET'S JUST PUT HIM IN A BOX, PERMANENTLY!
NOW, NOW, BOYS-WE'VE A JOB TO DO, AND I HAVE A PLAN. WE NEED MOONROCK TO FLY THE PLANE...UNLESS YOU WANT TO PILOT IT, Z?
FAKE, HELP MOONROCK OUT OF HIS COSTUME AND LET'S GET OUT OF HERE.
ALRIGHT, MOONROCK, JUST DON'T MESS MY HAIR.
NEXT MONTH: MR. Z, E-MAN, AND THE B-TEAM HAVE A DEADLY SPELLING CONTEST!